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TRAINING EXTENSION WORKERS *for the Job*

A Report of State Extension Activities/- 1953



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~~Federal~~ Extension Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture

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TRAINING EXTENSION WORKERS FOR THE JOB

By Mary L. Collings

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The Extension Service requires for its present-day program exceptionally well-trained personnel. As in the past, training programs must be thorough, for the character and ability of our personnel determine the kind, amount, and quality of the services which Extension renders. For the immediate years ahead, however, the challenge of the training job to be done is even greater. National leaders envision for Extension, first, an expansion and intensification of its efforts, and second, a vigorous redirection of its program. Much responsibility rests upon the present training programs in fashioning a new, dynamic approach to extension work.

A. TYPES OF TRAINING CONDUCTED

The total training program for extension breaks naturally into three major phases. Each of these is described in this report. Objectives are listed; a summary report of State activities is given in brief. By means of a questionnaire, information about training activities in 1953 was obtained from 47 States and 3 Territories.

I. PRESERVICE TRAINING:

This area of training deals with the recruiting, teaching, and selecting of personnel for extension employment. It is primarily the responsibility of academic institutions with the assistance and guidance of the Extension Service.

Its Objective: Develop a reservoir of graduates in agriculture and home economics from which to employ personnel having basic skills necessary for leadership in an educational program with farm people. This objective is implemented largely through undergraduate courses in the colleges and by means of advisory services to students.

Undergraduate Courses in Extension Work.

There were 41 institutions having undergraduate courses training for extension. Among the courses offered, 18 train for county agricultural work, 17 for county home demonstration work, and 31 for agricultural and home demonstration work jointly.

Courses offered in 1953 included extension administration - extension organization; extension methods; extension adult programs; history, policies, and objectives of extension; leadership in extension; program development; rural adult education; and evaluation.

Twelve institutions have an undergraduate major in extension education.* Twenty-nine others offer one or more courses in extension as an addition usually to a general agricultural or home economics major.

* Undergraduate majors in extension are offered in home economics at the Universities of Georgia, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, and Tennessee; Alabama and Virginia Polytechnic Institutes; and Oregon State College. Such courses in agriculture are offered at Cornell University; the Universities of Georgia, Missouri, and Nebraska; and Michigan State College.

Field Experience

In 21 of the institutions reporting, field experience was offered to students interested in extension. In different institutions field experience is supervised by various staff members, including State leaders of county agricultural or home demonstration work, leaders of training, or extension supervisors. The field experience course is offered by 1 institution in the fall, 2 in the winter, 2 in the spring, 10 in the summer, 1 in the fall or spring, and in 4 schools during more than one term. The number of weeks of field experience in the institutions reporting was:

<u>Approximate Length</u>	<u>Number of Institutions</u>
1 week or less	2
2 - 4 weeks	0
5 - 8 weeks	12
9 - 12 weeks	4

The others are indefinite in length, or there was no reply to this question.

Advisory Service by Extension Personnel

In 26 of the institutions a member of the extension staff has been assigned to give advisory service to undergraduate students in the college of agriculture, and in 19 institutions to students in home economics.

In these institutions, extension staff members have regular seminars with students interested in extension, or they serve as advisers to student extension clubs. In the opinion of extension people working with clubs, such clubs are thought to be more effective in getting students interested in extension than the faculty adviser is.

II. INSERVICE TRAINING

The second phase of the extension training program includes two types of training.

- (a) Induction training as the first step in training after employment. It is the training given to a worker immediately after employment to introduce him to the situation in which he will work.

Its Objective: Orient new employees to the Service in such a way that they are assured, productive members of the group in as short a time as possible.

Induction Training Conferences

Throughout the country the orientation or induction training conference for new extension workers is handled by various staff members, including the associate and assistant directors of extension, State leaders, supervisors, leaders of training, and by committees, drawn from all these groups. An increasing number of States are using the committee method of planning induction training. It is a regular annual event for new county agricultural agents in 36 States; for new home demonstration agents in 37 States; for new 4-H Club workers in 22 States; and for new State staff members in 26 States. The States vary in the number of days devoted to these conferences:

Length of Conference

Number of States

1 to 3 days	19
4 to 6 days	13
8 to 10 days	2
2 to 4 weeks	7

Whenever possible, many States provide 3 to 6 months in a training county for the new worker. The extent to which this practice is followed for all workers within a given State depends upon the situations in the county at the time.

- (b) On-the-job training, the continuous process planned to meet the needs of extension workers and to help them become better qualified for the responsibilities of their jobs. Much of the specialized training required by the peculiar demands of the extension profession must be obtained on the job. New findings of scientific research, new developments in communication media, and the evolving needs of the clientele to be served, make it essential that extension workers participate in a wide range of inservice training activities, each tailor-made to accomplish a specific objective.
- (1) Short-term schools - a 3 to 4-week session of organized, intensive, basic courses in cooperative extension education and in related fields, held either at a regionally selected center or as a part of a State's long-time training program. These schools form a part of the institution's collegiate offerings.
- (2) Workshops, clinics, seminars, etc. - These are intensive short-time, concentrated training situations directed at improving one phase of extension work or group of extension workers.
- (3) Conferences - These are brief (1 day to 1 week) training sessions usually dealing with operational details and inspirational or informative talks.

Objective: Develop all extension workers' ability to:

- Handle new programs.
- Perfect teaching skills.
- Organize and work with people.
- Evaluate extension work.

State Inservice Training Schools

After an agent has become established in the job, there remains the continuing responsibility to keep him informed--reoriented and inspired for improved service. Much of the inservice training given agents is not credit work. It is done through supervisory conferences, tours to experiment stations, clinics, and by means of specialists' meetings with agents or leaders and agent in an individual county. Some, however, is done for credit in specially arranged courses or schools.

Subject-Matter Refresher Credit Courses

In 1953, eight institutions held a subject-matter refresher credit course (or a combination subject-matter--methods school) for extension workers. These inservice training opportunities take various forms, depending on the needs and preferences among extension workers in the State and the administrative policy in the institution.

Regional Extension Summer Schools

In contrast to the combination subject-matter and methods courses, the regional extension summer schools feature general education rather than technical home economics or agriculture. These regional schools are held each year at the Universities of Arkansas and Wisconsin, Cornell University, Colorado Agricultural and Mechanical College, and Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College in Texas. In 1953, the five regional schools featured courses in 4-H organization and procedures, extension program development, evaluation, extension methods, communications, rural social organization, extension work in public policy, extension methods in nutrition, and methods of health education.

In 1953, 436 extension workers attended extension methods summer schools within their own States; 511 attended regional schools in other States, or a total attendance of 947.

III. GRADUATE STUDY

Training in this area is directed at the improvement of extension professional leadership. It is usually of at least a semester in length at a given time. It may or may not lead to advanced degrees. Graduate study is facilitated by sabbatic leave and further encouraged by a substantial number of available fellowships.

Its Objective: Prepare most competent personnel for advancement and service in larger responsibilities. Stimulate intellectual curiosity and add to enrichment of cultural life for extension workers.

Number of Established Extension Graduate Study Programs

Graduate study programs designed especially for extension workers have been set up in eight land-grant institutions. These include the Universities of Missouri and Wisconsin; Cornell and Louisiana State Universities; Kansas, Michigan and Mississippi State Colleges; and Colorado Agricultural and Mechanical College. In addition, three non-land-grant institutions offer graduate study programs designed primarily for extension workers. These are Columbia University, Harvard University, and University of Chicago. Extension workers wishing to do graduate work in the general area of extension education enroll in these schools. In addition, many others are taking graduate work in various subject-matter fields.

During 1953, there were 94 State personnel and 106 county personnel on leave for graduate study, or a total of 200 extension workers. Of these, 187 were taking work for credit, 6 were doing noncredit graduate study (there is no record of the type of study done by the additional 7).

B. ORGANIZATION TO DO THE TRAINING JOB

Through the interest of the Extension Organization and Policy Committee of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities two committees have been set up to stimulate development of a strong extension training program. These two committees in turn have sponsored the establishment of a State training organizational pattern which carries training responsibilities clear to the county level.

In brief, this organizational setup includes:

Preservice training

1. On the national basis: The Senate Committee on Preservice and Graduate Training for Extension Workers. This is a committee of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities composed of one director of extension, one dean of agriculture, one dean of home economics, one dean of a graduate school and the chief of the Personnel Training Branch, of the Federal Extension Service.
2. In States: A college department of extension education or, more generally, a college instructor with extension experience and extension advisers in charge of professional extension courses in the regular college curricula.
3. In Counties: A series of trainer counties where field experience is gained by college students taking preservice courses in extension curriculum under supervision of the course instructor or a cooperating extension supervisor.

Inservice training

1. On the national basis: A subcommittee of the Extension Organization and Policy Committee entitled "The Subcommittee on Extension Inservice Training." This subcommittee is composed of three extension directors, two State home demonstration leaders, and the chief of the Personnel Training Branch, Federal Extension Service.
2. In States: A coordinator of training activities and/or a committee on training made up of supervisors, specialists, agents, and the training coordinator; or in some States, the administrative staff directs training activities. There are 10 States and 1 Territory which have given one staff member the primary function of coordinating training activities and with the function a title that relates directly to this function.



